

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION**

Please amend the following portions of the specification as follows:

(1) Please amend paragraph [0038] as follows:

**[0038]** Referring to FIG. 6, the fasteners 10 are attached to the picket 44 by means of the rectangular members 14[44] of the fasteners 10 inserted into the rectangular bores 46 located at opposing ends of the picket 10. The ridges 26 of the rectangular member 14[44] frictionally engage the communicating sidewalls surrounding the bores 46 so that the fasteners 10 are securely anchored within the bores 46 to the picket 44. Desirably, fasteners 10 having clockwise-fastening screw threads 20 are inserted into first bores 46 of pickets 44 and fasteners 10 having counterclockwise-fastening screw threads 20 are inserted into second bores 46 of pickets 44 on opposite ends of the pickets 44. In such manner, the picket 44 with the fasteners 10 secured thereto can be attached to the fence rails 48 by inserting the exposed cylindrical members 12 of the fasteners into cooperating cylindrical bores 50 of the fence rails 48 and rotating the picket 44 so that the screw threads 20 of the cylindrical members 12 engage the sidewalls of the bores 50 as illustrated in FIG. 7. Preparing the picket 44 by inserting fasteners 10 of clockwise and counterclockwise fastening types in respective opposite ends thereof assures that the fasteners 10 engage the upper rail and lower rail at the same time by the same rotational movement to secure the pickets to the rail.

2) Please amend paragraph [0046] of the specification as follows:

**[0046]** A fifth embodiment of a fastener is illustrated in FIG. 11. As shown in FIG. 11, the fastener 100~~102~~ includes a solid, or alternatively hollow tubular member 110 having a

cylindrical shape. The fastener ~~100~~102 is desirably fabricated of a uniform material for ease of fabrication. Exemplary materials include plastics, nylon, polyvinyl chloride, and other deformable materials including but not limited to synthetic rubber and polyurethane. The member 110 includes a first set of ridges 112 disposed on an exterior surface of a first portion 111 thereof, for use in frictionally engaging an interior surface of a cylindrical opening provided in a longitudinal end of a picket or baluster. The maximum dimensions of the ridges of the fastener ~~100~~102 are preferably selected to be slightly larger than the internal dimensions of the opening in the picket, e.g. by an amount on the order of hundredths of an inch along diameters 114 of the ridges, such that the ridges frictionally engage the interior surface of the opening in the picket and stay engaged despite stresses that the assembled rail and picket may encounter later. In such case, the ridges and/or the cylindrical member 112 are fabricated of a material and thickness such that some deformation of the ridges and/or the cylindrical member 112 occurs upon inserting the fastener 100 into the opening of the picket.